

Alumnae Chapter in the United States House of Representatives on this day.

# HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF STATE SENATOR KEN ARMBRISTER

## HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the many accomplishments of Texas State Senator Ken Armbrister, of my Congressional District.

Ken Armbrister began his public service career in law enforcement. After graduating from Sam Houston State University, he attended the FBI National Academy. He served as a police officer for 14 years, and rose to the rank of Captain and Director of the Victoria Regional Police Academy. He was honored with the Defender of the Peace award by the Sam Houston State University College of Criminal Justice, and was twice named a Top Ten Crime Fighter by the Greater Dallas Crime Commission.

Mr. Armbrister was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 1983, and to the Texas Senate in 1987. He served as President Pro Tempore, as acting governor, and was honored as one of the Best Legislators in Texas. He currently serves on the Senate Committees on Business and Commerce, Government Organization, and State Affairs, and is Chairman of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources. He continues to work at the forefront of critical legislation, and authored the landmark legislation that established the Edwards Aquifer Authority that provided for the water needs of a 26 county area of South Texas.

Ken Armbrister repaid the trust of the people of Texas with a lifetime of dedicated and effective public service. He is an inspiration to the people of the community, of what and show's man's commitment and energy can accomplish.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to recognize State Senator Ken Armbrister.

# RECOGNIZING NEW JERSEY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

## HON. SCOTT GARRETT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the New Jersey State Law Enforcement Officers Association. Since 1938, the New Jersey Law Enforcement Officers Association and its members have worked to keep New Jersey safe from criminals and have sought to recognize those officers who go above and beyond the call of duty.

Our law enforcement officers risk their lives daily by placing the safety of others before themselves. We must never forget the sacrifice of our fallen officers who have given all to protect our families and communities.

Our local law enforcement officers are now a part of the front line in the battle to keep America safe from terrorist threats and on a daily basis confront the specter of further attacks. We must recognize the crucial role our local law enforcement plays in the War on Terror and provide them the support they need to keep us safe.

The New Jersey State Law Enforcement Officers Association, in recognition of the importance of coordinating law enforcement, numbers Federal, State, County and Municipal Law Enforcement agents in its membership. By working together professionally and with the association, our law enforcement officers can easily share information about criminal threats.

Our thoughts and prayers are with our law enforcement officers and with their families. We owe a great debt to those who work to keep us safe and it is only fitting that Congress recognize the work of these guardians of peace.

# LEGISLATION CONDEMNING RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AND INTOLERANCE IN INDIA

## HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce this Resolution to condemn the alleged statements and actions of complacency by the government authorities in Gujarat, led by Chief Minister Narendra Modi, in the face of the religious persecution of the Gujarati people.

In February of 2002, India experienced its greatest human rights crisis in a decade: orchestrated violence against Muslims in the state of Gujarat that claimed at least 2,000 lives in a matter of days. Three years after that horrific incident, Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of Gujarat has been indicted by various Indian and International human rights organizations for lending his hand to the violence.

Mr. Modi himself has not been shy about proudly professing his anti-Christian, anti-Muslim, and anti-tribal stances. He has repeatedly dehumanized the Muslim population of his state by accusing them of treachery; he has actively sought to interfere in the practice of the Christian faith in Gujarat, and he has caused wide-scale displacement of indigenous populations in the State in the face of stiff popular resistance. I find Mr. Modi's actions to be of the most reprehensible sort.

In an article in the Hindu Times on March 2, 2005, former Indian President K.R. Narayanan stated that "there was a 'conspiracy' between the BJP governments at the Centre and the state behind the 2002 Gujarat riots . . .". Further, a number of Indian human rights organizations, international human rights organizations, and a former Supreme Court Justice all recognize Chief Minister Modi's complicity in the violence.

He has attacked Muslims and Christians with vile venom, and according to both India's highest court and many international human rights groups, has condoned terrible, violent religious hate crimes, all the while, shielding those said to have committed them. In fact, in

a scathing indictment of Mr. Modi, the Supreme Court of India referred to the Chief Minister and his government as "the modern day Neros". Moreover, in a recent unprecedented order, the Supreme Court of India ordered the reopening of all the criminal cases that Mr. Modi has closed, regarding over 2,000 police cases in which the non-Hindu victims filed reports of rapes, killings, and destruction of their property.

Such actions by high ranking government officials of any religion are unacceptable and must not be tolerated.

I urge my colleagues to join me in condemning religious intolerance and promoting religious freedom, so that others may see what our great democracy stands for.

# HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF TEXAS REPRESENTATIVE CARLOS URESTI

## HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker rise to recognize State Representative Carlos I. Uresti for a lifetime of distinguished public service.

Representative Uresti is a native of San Antonio, and a graduate of McCollum High School. He continued his education by earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and a Teacher's Certificate from Saint Mary's University. After graduation he served four years in the United States Marine Corps, where he was awarded the Naval Achievement Medal. When his service to the Marines was over he returned to San Antonio and enrolled at Saint Mary's school of Law, where he received his law degree in 1992. He is currently is a partner at the Law Offices of Gonzales Hoblit & Ferguson.

In June 1997 Carlos Uresti was elected to the Texas House of Representatives. He honorably serves as Chairman of the Committee of Human Services, and as a member on the Committee on Elections and Select Committee on Healthcare Expenditures. As a former Marine, he is proud to serve as a member of the Texas House Veterans Coalition and the United States Marine Corps League.

During his time in office, Representative Carlos Uresti fought to prevent child abuse and neglect. He was instrumental in the creation of Bexar County's Blue Ribbon Task Force, a coalition that brings community members together to fight the cause against child abuse, and is a member of numerous organizations that help educate our youth.

Mr. Speaker, Representative Carlos I. Uresti is a credit to his community and I am honored to have had this opportunity to recognize the many achievements of this great public servant.

# THANKING MARY D. WATTS FOR HER SERVICE TO THE HOUSE

## HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of her retirement in April 2005, we rise to thank

Ms. Mary D. Watts for 26 years of distinguished service to the United States House of Representatives.

Mary began serving the United States House of Representatives in 1979 as a Technical Support Specialist working at House Information Systems. Milestones during her career at the House include conducting the first evaluations for office fax machines in 1980 and Personal Computers in 1984. She was instrumental in establishing training and support for House staff to make use of the new technologies associated with desktop computers.

As the Division Manager for the Customer Services Group, Mary managed the House computer helpdesk staff, Field Service Technicians and System Integrators providing technical support, and consulting services to every Member, Committee and Leadership office of the House.

Managing the day-to-day operations of the Technical Support Branch, Mary is responsible for information technology solutions and support services for 12,000 personal computers and over 4,000 BlackBerry wireless devices in Washington, DC and more than 950 district offices across this country.

Mary's contributions while serving the United States House of Representatives have been significant. Her passionate customer service, organizational knowledge and personnel management skills earned her the reputation among her colleagues and customers as a person with a calm demeanor and respect for everyone.

On behalf of the entire House community, we extend congratulations to Mary for her many years of dedication and outstanding contributions to the U.S. House of Representatives. We wish Mary many wonderful years in fulfilling her retirement dreams.

#### SMALL COMMUNITY OPTIONS FOR REGULATORY EQUITY ACT

#### HON. C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Mr. OTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Small Community Options for Regulatory Equity Act. Rural communities across my state and elsewhere are being unfairly burdened by Environmental Protection Agency regulations that have questionable benefit.

While we all want to ensure a clean, safe drinking water supply for our communities, we must remember that fiscal restraints sometimes require tradeoffs and accommodations. Many small communities believe that EPA regulations will do more harm than good by wasting limited public health funds complying with standards that do little to advance the interests of public health.

For those of you who may have forgotten the arsenic debate of just a few years ago, let me refresh your memory. The Safe Drinking Water Act was used in the past to clean up pollution caused by previous business practices. Now the EPA is using the act to clean up Mother Nature herself. Arsenic is a naturally occurring component in the soil and water of many Western states, including Idaho. Using questionable science, the EPA has committed to ensuring all domestic water sys-

tems meet the arbitrary 10 parts-per-billion standard for arsenic—no matter how small those systems are. This is down from the 50 parts-per-billion standard set in 1975.

When the Safe Drinking Water Act was passed, Congress provided flexibility for EPA to determine whether it is economically or technologically feasible to obtain a certain level of reduced contamination. Essentially, the act states that if it's too expensive, smaller systems simply need to get as close to the standard as they reasonably can. Unfortunately EPA has decided not to use that flexibility. EPA has determined that paying \$1,000 per year per user for the smaller water systems to meet the arsenic standard is affordable.

We know that many of our rural communities have low-income residents who make difficult decisions each month. They must choose which bills to pay and which to put off. These folks aren't worried about the cable bill; they're worried about being able to cover their heat, food, power and even prescription drug costs every month. And when faced with those choices, they'll choose to pay their water bill first. But the EPA—in its infinite wisdom—has decided to place a higher priority on marginal reductions in arsenic level than such basic needs as food and shelter.

That is unacceptable, which is why I am introducing legislation today to allow small and rural communities, those under 10,000 in population, to choose whether they want EPA to enforce regulations on naturally occurring contaminants. If the eligible community determines it is too costly to comply with the rule, it can request an exemption from the regulation, which EPA must grant.

No one is talking about removing all the arsenic from the water. We are talking about removing parts per billion, which is removing a very small amount of something that is barely even there. There is no bright line of concentration at the parts-per-billion level beyond which arsenic becomes unsafe. EPA views 9.9 parts-per-billion as safe and 10.1 as unsafe, despite the fact that there is little health difference between such small differences. EPA can't determine how much arsenic ingestion above the federal standard is harmful. While EPA has said that arsenic concentrations above its standard don't necessarily present an unreasonable risk to health, concentrations above 10 parts-per-billion do create a significant financial burden for small communities.

This mandate doesn't consider the unintended consequences and it can't balance competing local priorities. Local communities are in the best position to determine where their scarce resources need to go. EPA is not going to the communities and suggesting ways they can comply or technology they can use. Rather than being a good partner, EPA is once again just an enforcer, and is waiting until 2006 to impose fines on communities that are not in compliance. Such one-size-fits-all government "solutions" do nothing to make the water cleaner. They only provoke bitterness and stifle cooperation.

One small community in Idaho already has had to lay off its only police officer in order to afford studies and other requirements related to complying with the arsenic regulation. Now we are asking people to choose between real public safety and a theoretical health benefit. Further compounding the problem for this rural community, the EPA recently denied its re-

quest for a compliance extension, as provided for in the agency's own regulation. Community leaders know they can't comply by 2006 and are trying to do the right thing—but EPA refuses to help them.

We are supposed to have a democratic process here in the United States. In this case, the EPA is overriding the will of local citizens. I believe it's time to put the power back into the hands of those most impacted to determine what truly is best for them.

I remain concerned that this regulation will have very adverse economic impacts on thousands of rural communities across the nation, without addressing legitimate human health concerns. Since there is no economically feasible way for small communities to meet this standard and the standard may result in no health benefits, I support allowing each eligible rural community to decide whether to comply. I encourage you to join me in cosponsoring the Small Community Options for Regulatory Equity Act.

#### HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE EDMUND KUEMPEL

#### HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Texas State Representative Edmund Kuempel of my Congressional District for his exceptional career in public service.

Mr. Kuempel was born and raised in Austin, Texas, and received his Bachelor of Arts in Business from Texas Lutheran College in Seguin. He was first elected to the Texas State Legislature in 1983, and is currently the Chairman of the House Administration Committee.

He has received numerous awards for his legislative work, including the Man of the Year Award from the Texas County Agricultural Agents Association, the Career Achievement Award from the Texas Chamber of Commerce, the Leader of Excellence Award from the Free Market Committee, and the Texas Chamber of Commerce Legislative Leadership Award.

Edmund Kuempel continues to serve the people of Wilson, Gonzales, and Guadalupe Counties with his hard work and dedication. He is a credit to the Texas State Legislature, and his dedication to his state and country are admirable.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have the opportunity to recognize the many achievements of State Representative Edmund Kuempel.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

#### HON. DIANE E. WATSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that on rollcall vote No. 67, I would like the record to reflect that I inadvertently voted "nay." I would like the record to reflect that I intended to vote "yea."